

VZCZCXYZ0029
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBH #0678/01 1111522
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 211522Z APR 06
FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2475
INFO RUEHB/E/AMEMBASSY BELIZE 1250
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN 5389
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN 3516
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON 8328
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO 0894
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE 3359
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN 4521
RUEHDG/AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO 2637
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 0225

C O N F I D E N T I A L NASSAU 000678

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR WBENT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/20/2016

TAGS: [ETTC](#) [ETRD](#) [PREL](#) [CU](#) [BF](#)

SUBJECT: BAHAMAS REVIEW OF TITLE III OF LIBERTAD ACT

REF: STATE 57782

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission D. Brent Hardt for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Post recommends waiver of the provisions of Title III of the Libertad Act for The Bahamas. The Bahamas has a cordial relationship with Cuba, generally supports Cuba in international fora, and engages in both cultural and economic exchanges with Cuba, including promotion of Cuban trade. The Bahamian government justifies its relationship as a pragmatic policy needed to address bilateral migration issues, provide support to Bahamian travelers and address issues of common concern to a nation on their maritime border. The Bahamian government claims to advocate human rights concerns to Cuba privately. The extremely close on-going bilateral cooperation between The Bahamas and the U.S. in drug interdiction, alien interdiction, anti-terrorism and border security matters merits a waiver of the provisions of the Libertad Act. END SUMMARY.

Bahamas-Cuba Relations

¶2. (C) The Governments of the Bahamas and Cuba maintain cordial relations. The Government of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas (GCOB) maintains an embassy in Cuba, believing a physical presence is necessary to provide consular services to Bahamian citizens in Cuba, to address bilateral migration issues and to avoid a repeat of miscommunication such as occurred in 1980 between the Cuban and Bahamian navies that led to the deaths of several Bahamian sailors. The Government of Cuba also maintains an embassy in Nassau.

¶3. (C) Illegal migration to The Bahamas from Haiti and Cuba is one of the country's biggest domestic political issues. Illegal Cuban migrants interdicted in Bahamian waters are taken to the Carmichael Road Detention Center. The repatriation process tends to move slowly and in small numbers, which increases costs to the GCOB to keep the migrants detained. There are sometimes international issues surrounding Cuban migrants in The Bahamas, and the GCOB sees a pragmatic need to maintain a functioning relationship with Cuba to manage repatriation and any concomitant international complications.

¶4. (C) In international fora, the GCOB typically votes as a block with CARICOM in favor of maintaining an open dialog

with Cuba, opposing the U.S. embargo of Cuba and abstaining from country-specific human rights resolutions. Prime Minister Perry Christie did not attend the December 2005 CARICOM-Cuba Summit in Barbados between Fidel Castro and Caribbean heads of state, sending Foreign Minister Fred Mitchell in his place. Christie has told the Ambassador and other embassy officials that he has spoken out in support of democracy and respect for human rights by Cuban authorities in his private meetings with Fidel Castro and other senior Cuban officials. Post is unaware of other GCOB support for human rights and democracy in Cuba.

Business and Cultural Exchanges are Ongoing

¶5. (C) There is a Havantur office in Nassau. According to the Bahamian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, approximately 20,000 Bahamians visit Cuba every year. Additionally, there are approximately 150 Bahamian students studying in Cuba on scholarship, approximately 20 Bahamians in Cuban prisons and over 600 Bahamians who received Cuban-paid health care in Cuba last year. An unknown number of Cuban doctors at work in The Bahamas provide thousands of Bahamians with health care. In one effort late last year, Cuban doctors provided 1,729 eye exams to Bahamians. Cuban teachers work closely with Bahamian authorities, particularly in the area of special education. Cubana de Aviacion offers direct flights to Havana from Nassau.

¶6. (C) Direct Bahamian investment in Cuba is estimated to be minimal given the country's exchange controls and economic dependence upon the United States. Third country investment in Cuba via Bahamian financial institutions is likely, but unknown. According to the GCOB, The Bahamas imported \$1.6 million in Cuban goods in 2004. The Bahamas Agricultural and Industrial Corporation and the Government of Cuba sponsored a Cuban trade show in Nassau in March 2006 featuring 23 Cuban companies. A trip to Cuba for a Bahamian trade show and related trade agreements are currently under discussion. There are currently no bilateral trade agreements in force.

Recommendation for Waiver

¶7. (C) In light of the extremely close on-going bilateral cooperation between the U.S. and The Bahamas in drug interdiction, alien interdiction, anti-terrorism, and border security matters, post believes that The Bahamas should continue to be granted a waiver from implementation of Title III of the Libertad Act.

ROOD